Post 12/11/70

Mitchell Disavows Hostage Proposal

Associated Press

Attorney General John N. Mitchell yesterday declined to embrace or disclaim the suggestion by his top aide that the government refuse to negotiate with political terrorists should they kidnap any U.S. official below the President and Vice President.

Deputy Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst "was speaking for himself," said Justice Department information officer John W. Hushen, who put the question to Mitchell at the request of a reporter.

"The Attorney General said he was glad to have his Kleindienst's recommendation, but he said that if confronted with a kidnaping situation in which there is a demand for release of certain prisoners, the Justice Department would only be in an advisory position," Hushen said.

Kleindienst was reported to have said that, in the event of a political kidnaping similar to abductions of officials in Latin America and Canada, he would recommend the government sacrifice officials below the President and Vice President rather than meet demands of terrorists.

"Leaving aside the President and Vice President and their families, I'd recommend they not barter. There's no way you can protect everyone —the cabinet, senators, congressmen. It would be better to make one sacrifice. Then there would never be another incident," he was quoted as saying.